

mission through a railway accident. At intervals the voice of her husband said "Theodosia!" like a clock striking, but the ticking went on in spite of it.

"And if that isn't the cunningest yew hedge I ever saw!" she said, "with doors cut in it, just as if it were a wall, so that you can see the river through it. Lord Thurso, can you see the river through it from where you're sitting? Silas, change places with Lord Thurso, because I want him to see the river through it. My! look at that bug! What do you call them? Oh, yes, butterfly—what a beauty! Why, if it isn't going to settle right here on the arm of my chair! Isn't it tame? The bugs in America aren't half as tame as that. Are they, Silas?"

Lily finished her tea with extraordinary celerity and got up. It was she who had asked Theodosia here, and she did not for a moment repent having done so, but she began to foresee that it would be necessary to provide Theodosia with relays of companions, who should take her for little walks and little excursions in the punt and drives in the motor, if she wanted to save her Saturday till Monday from shipwreck. She thanked Heaven that Maud was coming, who was always so serene in dealing with impossible people, and listened to their impossible conversation in a manner that was quite marvelous. Clearly, also, it was by a direct dealing of Providence that Alice Yardly was of this party, for Alice asked for nothing more than to be allowed to talk. She was perfectly happy sitting opposite somebody who talked simultaneously, so long as she was not interrupted by violent things like direct questions. Theodosia never asked them. She asked questions by the score, but never required any answer. Alice and she talking to each other would be a most happy pair.

So she took Theodosia now to the river, and punted her about, "punted her around" was Theodosia's subsequent phrase for it, and when they returned it was to find that everybody who was expected had arrived and had gone to their rooms to dress. The evening was divinely warm, and dinner was to take place out of doors in one of the pavilions. Lady Thurso was a quick dresser, and though everybody else was already dressing, she found that she had ten minutes to spare after she had shown Theodosia to her room. So, instead of going at once to dress, she went to Maud's room. Maud was betwixt and between, with a river of hair flowing goldenly down her back, and much excursive geniality.

"Dearest Lily," she said, "but it was too awful of me, and I hope you didn't wait. I was late for lunch, and late starting afterward, and as there were other people going to Taplow, I motored down with them. Isn't the country looking too divine? Did Thurso come with you? Do stop and talk to me for five minutes. I know you dress like lightning. How many maids surround you? Three, is it? Oh, what fun all last week has been! You really do give your relations a good time. And it's an old-established custom for you to smoke a cigarette while you wait till it's time for you to dress. Do smoke!"

Lady Thurso lit a cigarette, and, catching Maud's eye, nodded in the direction of her maid, and spoke in French.

"Send her away for a few minutes," she said.

Maud gave a little giggle of laughter.

"What a bad language to choose," she said, "because Hortense is French. Aren't you, Hortense? Will you go away, please, and come back when her ladyship leaves me?"

Then Maud turned to her sister-in-law.

"Now, dear Lily, what is it?" she asked.

"Well, first, do be very kind, Maud, and take Theodosia away on all possible occasions, so that she gets on Thurso's nerves as little as may be."

Maud brought a long braid of hair around her shoulder.

"Then I know what you really want to talk about," she said.

"Theodosia first, and afterward?"

"Exactly. Thurso's nerves. He was fearfully jumpy coming down, and I'm sure he isn't well," she said. "Has he been having bad headaches up in Scotland?"

"Yes, day after day," said Maud.

She paused a moment, wondering whether she had better say what was on the tip of her tongue. Then she settled to do so; after all, it was her brother's wife to whom she was talking.

"He had to get through his day's work, too," she said, "and I think he took laudanum rather freely. I was anxious about that, too. I think he ought to get a doctor's advice about it."

"Ah, but his headaches have ceased," said Lily, with sudden relief. "He told me he had not had one since he came to town."

"I'm very glad," rejoined Maud, "because—well, it can't be a good thing to get in the habit of taking that stuff, only while he was up there he had to get relief somehow. But, of course, if he has had no return of them, one needn't be anxious any more."

Lily looked at her, and then spoke quietly.

"You are not telling me quite all," she said; "I think you had better."

Maud had no inclination to do otherwise; even if Lily had not guessed this, she would probably have told her.

"Quite true," she said, "and it is this: He has begun to take it for its own sake. Coming up in the train, for instance, he thought I was asleep, and I saw him—yes, I spied on him, if you like—I saw him go to his bag, take out the bottle and take a dose. He had no headache; he was never better. He wanted the effects of it. It was a big dose, too—double the ordinary one, I should say."

Lady Thurso said: "Thank you, Maud," and was silent again. "What do you advise?" she asked at length.

"Get him to see a doctor."

"He won't. We must think it over. Of course, it is desirable that I should appear to find out what you have told me for myself—find out, that is to say, that he is taking this stuff."

"You may say I told you, if that will do any good," said Maud.

Lady Thurso went down the passage to her room. Outside Thurso's dressing-room was standing his valet, and a sudden thought occurred to her.

"Is his lordship dressed, do you know?" she asked.

"No, my lady; his lordship told me he would call me when he began," said the man.

She went to the door, tapped and entered.

"Flynn told me you weren't dressing yet," she said, "and I

wanted to talk to you a moment. I'm afraid you must take in Alice Yardly and have Theodosia next you. But we'll change about to-morrow."

Thurso was lying on his sofa, doing nothing, with no book and paper near him. He had not been sleeping, apparently, for his eyes were wide and bright. He laughed as she spoke.

"Why should we change about to-morrow?" he said. "I delight in Theodosia. I delight in everything to-night. Is it dressing time? Don't let's have dinner till half-past eight. It is absurd dining at eight in the summer, and the hours before dinner are so delicious. I don't feel as if I could dress yet."

Lily had walked to the window and was observing him closely. He stretched himself luxuriously as he spoke, and she saw he had a cigarette in each hand, both of which were burning.

"Is that a new plan," she said—"smoking two cigarettes at once?"

"Yes, so far as I am concerned, but not original. Don't you remember the Pirate King in 'Peter Pan' smokes two, or was it three, cigars together? The moral is that you can't have too much of a good thing. One should take one's pleasures thick, not thin. I am enjoying myself. It was an excellent plan to come down here. How wonderful the light is! How good everything smells!"

He turned a little on his sofa, so that he faced her as she stood by the window, with the light shining on to her delicate profile.

"And, my God, how beautiful you are, Lily!" he said.

She left the window and came and stood close to him. She felt certain as to what he had been doing; she had been with him before when laudanum gave him relief from one of his headaches.

"Thurso, have you had any headache to-day?" she asked.

"Headache? No! I've forgotten what headaches are like."

"Then why have you been taking laudanum, opium, whatever it is?" she asked.

"I—haven't," he said, stumbling for a moment on the word.

She went quickly across to the washing-stand, took up a glass that stood there, and smelled it.

"Where is the use of saying that?" she asked.

He got up quickly, ashamed of having lied to her, and ashamed of his stupidity in not being more careful. But his shame was infinitesimal, compared to his anger with her. She had come in and smashed up all his happiness; instead of that wonderful sense of well-being, of utter physical and mental contentment, he felt only furiously enraged against her. He had taken his laudanum, and what right had she to break in upon the divine effects of it, robbing him of what he had bought and paid for?

"And where is the use of your interfering like this?" he said.

"You have spoiled it all now. It would serve you right if I took another dose now, and did not come down to dinner. You know nothing about it at all. I was a martyr to those headaches up in Scotland, and I began—yes, I began—to get into the habit of it. But I am breaking myself of it. Till to-night I hadn't taken any for two days, and I was not going to take any more for three days, and after that for four. You seem to think . . . I don't know what you think."

She felt more tenderly toward him at this moment than she had felt, perhaps, for years. His weakness—his voluble, incoherent weakness, as of a child making excuses—touched her.

"Oh, Thurso, you don't know what a dangerous thing you are doing!" she said. "Do be a man, and don't think about three days and four days, but stop it now, at once! The longer it goes on, the more difficult you will find it. Give me the bottle, or whatever it is, like a good fellow, and let me throw it away. You will be glad you have done so every day of your life."

The effect of the drug was still on him, enhancing the beauty of the light and of the country smells; enhancing, too, her beauty, as she pleaded with him. His anger died down, and as for his shame, her appeal somehow mitigated that. The habit he had begun to form was not yet deeply rooted; his will was not yet overcome, and all his best self told him that she was right, beyond any need or possibility of argument. He unlocked his dispatch box and took out a bottle, half empty.

"Yes, you are right," he said; "here it is. Don't despise me if you can help it, Lily."

"Thank you, Thurso," she said; "thank you most awfully. You will be so glad."

She went to the window and poured the brown fluid out among the leaves of the creeper. Then she flung the bottle into the shrubbery.

"I ought to thank you," he said, "and I do. Thank you, dear."

The evening was extraordinarily warm and windless, and though Mr. Silas Moreton sent for a black and white plaid, which he put around his shoulders, for fear of chills, no one else felt the necessity of extra wraps, and after dinner a bridge table was started for the two Americans, with Ruby and Jim Stratton, while the others preferred for the present to wander about in the dusk. The light still lingered in the sky, and the smooth surface of the river lay westward in pools and reaches of reflected sunset. White moths hovered over the garden beds, emerging every now and then from the darkness into the bright light cast by the lamps in the shelter in which they had dined, and the odors of night began to steal about. Lily, when they rose from the table, found Count Villars by her side, inclined for a stroll, and leaving the others, they went down through the door cut in the box hedge, to catch the last of the evening light on the river. Woman of the world that she was, and skilled at directing talk into channels in which she wished it to flow, she still felt a little nervous with him. At dinner he had been the polished, suggestive talker, but it had seemed to her all the time as if he was talking from the surface only, saying the quick, glib things that came so easily to him. And when they had separated themselves from the others, she found her impression had been correct.

"It was so good of you to ask me here," he said, "because that means that you admit me again to friendship and intimacy with you. At least, I take it at that."

He found and struck a match to light his cigarette, holding it in hollowed hands, so that the flame vividly illuminated his face. He had changed extraordinarily little; his dark eyes still had the fire of youth in them, and his face had neither grown stout nor attenuated. His hair was still untouched by gray, and a plume of it hung as she had always remembered it, a little apart and over his